had about her the pure light of youth - would always have it; her head, her figure, her flexibility, her flickering colour, her Jovely, silly eyes, her natural quavering tone, ail played together towards this effect by some trick that had never been exposed."[7] A domineering wife and an irresponsible mother, Mrs. Brookenham loves only herself and her drawing-room talks with her circle of friends. Her selfish and silly behaviour is the characteristic fruit of a selfish and silly society. Her intelligence and shrewdness enable her to exploit men and situations to her own maximum advantage. She wants Vanderbank for herself and hence does not like the idea of Nanda marrying him. Van is tempted to marry Nanda when Mr. Longdon promises to settle an endowment on Nanda if Van should marry her. Mrs. Brookenham cleverly exploits the vanity of Van to dissuade him from agreeing to Longdon's proposal. In the presence of Van she tells Mitchy that Van "won't want to have the pecuniary question mixed up with the matter : to look in short as if he had to be paid. He's like you, you know - he's proud."[8] It is no wonder that, after this episode, the proud Van decides not to marry Nanda for Longdon's money. As if this measure is not enough to alienate Van from Nanda, Mrs. Brookenham openly humiliates Nanda at the dinner-party in Tischy Grendon's place. In taking this step she is motivated by a double purpose. She wants Van to know that Nanda has lost her innocence. She draws the attention of the guests to the fact that Nanda has been reading 'filthy' French novels. She wants Longdon to realise that Nanda is being corrupted by her relations and friends, in order that he might take Nanda out of the corrupting circle. The resourceful Mrs. Brookenham thus succeeds in keeping Van for herself and arranging for the maintenance and protection of Nanda by Longdon. In the gratification of her egotism,, she even sacrifices the hapiness of her own daughter.

The Duchess is the foil to Mrs. Brookeiham. She has a niece, Aggie, who has also come of age. But, unlike Mrs. Brook, the

Duchess has not given complete freedom to the girl to acquire a knowledge of the world. She has 'protected' Aggie until her marriage with Mitchy, but Aggie is swept off her feet and corrupred by the wicked world in no time. Aggie betrays her husband by becoming the mistress of Lord Petherton, who is her aunt's lover also. The Duchess also schemes to get Aggie married to the rich Mitchy, for, (ike Mrs. Brookenham, she believes that material well-being is more important than happiness.